

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and rejection set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims Status

Claims 1 through 4, 6, 9, and 11 through 20 remain pending in the application. Claims 7 and 8 have been canceled herein. Claims 1 through 4, 6, 9, 11, and 13 through 17 have been amended to even more succinctly define the invention and/or to improve their form. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added. Claims 1, 6, and 14 are the only independent claims pending in the application.

Allowed Claims

It is acknowledged with appreciation that Claims 1 through 4, 14 through 18, and 20 are allowed. It is respectfully submitted that the amendments to any of these claims presented herein do not affect their allowability.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 7, 9, 12, and 13 are merely objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. With the exception of Claim 7, which has been canceled, these claims remain in their dependent form, inasmuch as it is believed that Claim 6 from which they either directly or indirectly depend will be found to be allowable.

Rejection

Claims 6, 8, 11, and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kibune in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,970,278 (Munakata). (As above-noted, Claim 8 *inter alia* is canceled herein. Accordingly, further comment on that claim is not necessary.) The rationale underlying the rejection is succinctly set forth in the Official Action.

Response to Rejection

The rejection of the pending claims is respectfully traversed.

As above-noted, Claim 6 has been amended *inter alia* to include features recited in dependent Claim 7. Claim 7 has not been incorporated *verbatim* in Claim 6. Compare the underlined text in the next paragraph with Claim 7. However, it is believed that amended Claim 6 does, in fact, recite the allowable subject matter of Claim 7 and is now allowable.

Amended Claim 6 calls for an image forming apparatus that includes a plurality of movable image carriers, the image carriers forming latent images upon exposure at respective exposing positions to form a toner image at the latent images; a movable intermediate transfer body, to which the toner image is transferred from the image carriers, for carrying the toner image; and a contacting member separably contacting to the intermediate transfer body at a contacting position for transferring the toner image from the intermediate transfer body to a transfer medium. The image carrier located most closely to the contacting position in a direction extending along the intermediate transfer body on a downstream side in a moving direction of the intermediate transfer body with respect to the contacting position, constitutes a first image carrier where a position for transfer between the first image carrier and the intermediate transfer body constitutes a first transfer position. The image carrier located most closely to the contacting position in a direction

extending along the intermediate transfer body on an upstream side in a moving direction of the intermediate transfer body with respect to the contacting position, constitutes a second image carrier where a position for transfer between the second image carrier and the intermediate transfer body constitutes a second transfer position. A toner image formed on the intermediate transfer body is transferred onto a transfer material after passing through the first transfer position and the second transfer position again. The relationship $Lb + Sb \geq Lm$ is satisfied where a distance from the contacting position to the second transfer position along the moving route of the intermediate transfer body in a direction reverse to the moving direction of the intermediate transfer body is set as Lb , where a distance from the exposing position on the second image carrier to the second transfer position along the move of the second image carrier is set as Sb , and where an image length formed on the intermediate transfer body is set as Lm . The latent image formation on the second image carrier is done at a time different from a contacting operation of the contacting member.

The Examiner notes that Kibune differs from the claimed invention in not disclosing that a latent image formation on the second image carrier is done at a time different from a contacting operation of a contacting member.

The Examiner relies on Munakata for allegedly disclosing an image forming apparatus comprising an intermediate transfer belt cleaning means 3 being spaced from an intermediate transfer belt 2 from a start of a printing operation to an end of primary transfer of a leading edge of a last image.

The Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to apply a timing for a cleaning means as taught by Munakata to the contacting member of Kibune to reduce abrasion between the intermediate transfer belt and the cleaning means.

As above-noted, amended independent Claim 6 has been formulated to include features recited in allowable Claim 7. It is respectfully submitted that Kibune and Munakata do not at least disclose or suggest the contacting member as recited in amended Claim 6. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that amended Claim 6 also is allowable over Kibune and Munakata whether taken individually or in combination.

Dependent Claims

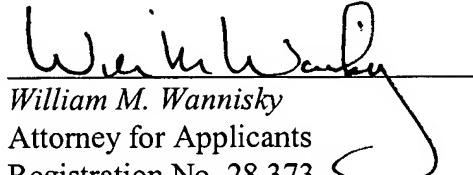
Claims 9, 11 through 13, and 19 depend either directly or indirectly from Claim 6 and are allowable by virtue of their dependency and in their own right for further defining Applicants' invention. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Closing Comments

It is respectfully submitted that all of the pending claims are allowable over the art of record and that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application are earnestly solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our New York office at the address shown below.

Respectfully submitted,


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